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A Braided Approach to Framing Creative Process. Articulating Design Research Through Disciplinary Collaborative Practice

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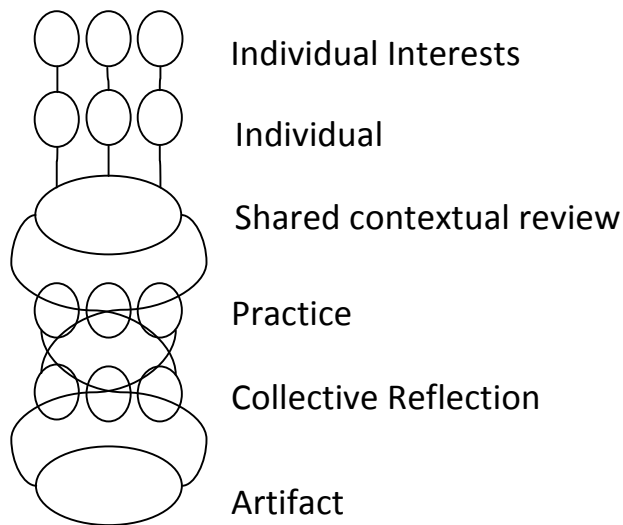
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Keywords: Collaboration, design research through practice, clothing and textile design, design methodologies

Context: This paper details the development of a framing mechanism for practice-based design research that is collaborative, dialogic, emergent and iterative. As design scholars charged by Bye's challenge to "reframe experimental investigations and the development of artifacts and exhibitions as research through practice" (Bye, 2010). We offer a method of capturing the fuzzy, messy creative process of sensemaking, (Hoysten, 2010). We expand on Bye's existing model of creative scholarship to encompass collective gestures. We adopt the multifarious yet simultaneous artifact of the braid as a visual and operational metaphor for forthcoming design research that meshes apparel design, textile science and historic costume scholarship.

Objectives are multi-fold. Through collaboration, to foster creative thinking, shared learning, and meaning making by promoting research through practice. (1) We find that sharing knowledge elucidates knowledge. Tacit knowledge can be described as the "stuff" we know but cannot articulate. The braid is an effective metaphor as it captures the process of tacit knowledge becoming explicit knowledge and individual inquiry developing into shared meaning. (2) We seek a method that helps define the process as our product. If our design artifact is a signature of a collective investigation rather than an object to be physically evaluated (Bye, 2010) how is that framed? How is it valued and measured? Our aim is to develop a method that recognizes process and shared meaning in a clear, measurable terms, accessible and translatable as a contribution to knowledge. (3) We value cross-pollination and address the diversity of scholarship within textile and apparel studies. Collaborative efforts create shared values and bolster our unique strengths as a field.

Method: Bye's framework for apparel and textile design scholarship maps the process of creating output through actions of questioning, the contextual review, practicing, reflection, generating the artifact. We adapt Bye's Framework for textile and apparel design scholarship to accommodate collaborative research by expanding a section for individual and shared contextual review. Graham Sullivan suggests viewing creative scholarship as a braid. We found this metaphor helpful in clarifying (1) the discrete parts (2) the iterations of the process of our design practice. As well, we propose the object of the braid i.e. our dynamic whole as a research artifact, articulated and framed process. The Braided model includes (a) Individual Interests/Histories as Researchers; (b) Individual Contextual Review; (c) Collective Reflection; (d) Shared contextual review; (e) Practice and (f) artifact. Dialog and reflection are built into each stage of practice.



Model visualizing The Braided Approach to Framing Collaborative Creative Process.

Discussion and Implications. This paper contributes to the continuing discourse seeking to “shape the tenets of design research” through practice. More importantly, this research embeds collaborative practice into the evolving canon of design research within our field as a valuable and valid approach to developing knowledge. Creative practice is “the site” of mentorship (traditional and reverse) to germinate and share ideas. The group collectively constructs new knowledge. The model developed in this paper will be used in the development and testing of forthcoming design research consisting of an original collaborative garment design we hope to present at The 2016 International Textile and Apparel Association design exhibition. Cross-pollination efforts mesh our core subject areas of historic costume, apparel design and textile science in a new and novel way.

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